

U. S. S. CANBERRA (CAG-2)
CARE OF FLEET POST OFFICE
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

CAG2/17:hm
5720

Ser: 123

JAN 21 1961

From: Commanding Officer, USS CANBERRA (CAG-2)
To: Chief of Naval Operations

Subj: History of USS CANBERRA; submission of

Ref: (a) OPNAV INST 5750.7, 9 February 1956

Encl: (1) History of USS CANBERRA

1. Enclosure (1) is forwarded in accordance with reference (a).

ELI T. REICH



M.H. SAPPINGTON
By direction

HISTORY OF THE USS CANBERRA (CAG-2)

The USS CANBERRA, only American man-of-war having the same name as a foreign capital, was launched at the Quincy, Mass., Shipyard of the Bethlehem Steel Co., on April 19, 1943. Originally scheduled as the USS PITTSBURGH, the ship was renamed to commemorate Her Majesty's Australian Ship CANBERRA, which was lost in the First Battle of Savo Island on the night of Aug. 9, 1942. Lady Alice C. Dixon, wife of Sir Owen Dixon, Australian Minister to the United States, christened the ship USS CANBERRA. Rear Admiral R.A. Theobald, USN, First Naval District Commandant, placed the CANBERRA in commission on the afternoon of Oct. 14, 1943.

After a fitting out period of six weeks, the CANBERRA, one of the U.S. Navy's most modern men of war, proceeded to Port of Spain, Trinidad, W.I.F., and arrived there December 8. During a short but intensive training and "shakedown" period, the CANBERRA's personnel and equipment were brought to fighting efficiency with special emphasis on gunnery and damage control.

Ready in all respects to join the Fleet, the CANBERRA got underway Jan. 14, 1944, and transited the Panama Canal Jan. 19. Upon reporting for duty to Commander-In-Chief, Pacific Fleet, her first orders directed her to proceed to San Diego, Calif., where she picked up a large draft of men awaiting transportation to Pearl Harbor.

During the eight months that followed, (from Feb. 14 to Oct. 13, 1944,) the USS CANBERRA, participated in 18 separate engagements. It was on the latter date that she was hit by an aerial torpedo from a Japanese plane off Formosa.

Five torpedo planes penetrated the screen and headed for the CANBERRA. All five were shot down by CANBERRA gunners, but not before the last plane successfully launched its torpedo.

The torpedo struck the CANBERRA's starboard side amidships. The ensuing violent explosion caused the ship to lie dead in the water as two fire rooms and the adjacent engine room were flooded. As a result of the torpedo hit, 23 lives were lost. The ship was then under tow and at the agonizingly slow speed of three knots made her escape from the enemy.

After being towed 2,300 miles to a U.S. advance base, the cruiser underwent temporary repairs and then made the 10,000 mile trip from Manus in the Admiralty Islands to Boston Navy Yard in 35 days, from Jan. 13 to Feb. 16, 1945, under the power of three engines.

more

Enclosure (1) to CANBERRA
serial _____ of _____

After permanent repairs and installation of the newest types of equipment at Boston, the CANBERRA sailed on Oct. 16 for a week's cruise off New England with members of the NROTC from Harvard University. She then went to Baltimore for the Navy Day celebration on Oct. 25. After a four day stay during which several thousand visitors inspected the ship, CANBERRA got underway for Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, for her shakedown cruise.

After intensive training exercises and an annual military inspection, the CANBERRA proceeded westward to Panama, arriving at Colon the morning of Dec. 4. Once again, she reported to the Commander-In-Chief, Pacific Fleet for duty and assignment.

The CANBERRA was later inactivated on July 6, 1946, at the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, Bremerton, Washington.

In January, 1952, the CANBERRA was selected for major conversion to a guided missile cruiser. In May, 1952, the CANBERRA was towed to the New York Shipbuilding Corp., Camden, New Jersey, and arrived on June 30, 1952. While there, CANBERRA underwent major reconversion to become one of the world's first two guided missile cruisers. She was commissioned in shipboard ceremonies at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard June 15, 1956.

After making a weekend stop at Charleston, S.C., where she had over 12,000 visitors, CANBERRA headed for Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and her shakedown cruise. Operating in the Caribbean from September 20 to December 8, 1956, the crew set two operational records. A recovery was accomplished in record time during a man overboard drill. Another record was set in visual communications by the signalmen. More messages were transmitted in a 24 hour period than by any other ship operating under the cognizance of Fleet Training Group within the past year.

On her return from the "GITMO" area, CANBERRA visited the city of Havana early in December and was honored to have distinguished guests aboard.

Returning to her home port, Norfolk, CANBERRA went into the Naval Shipyard for a post-shakedown overhaul. Many of her crew were awarded a welcome Christmas leave.

CANBERRA again sailed to Cuba for training exercises on February 4, 1957 this time for three weeks. Returning, she went to the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis to participate in the presentation of the charter of the newly formed Annapolis Council of the Navy League of the United States. Some 1,600 guests toured the ship during the weekend, including the 20,000th visitor since commissioning.

more

On March 18, 1957, while conducting operations in the Virginia Capes area CANBERRA was called upon to return to Norfolk to embark the President of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower, for a leisurely cruise to Bermuda by way of the Bahamas for his meeting with British Prime Minister MacMillan. The President expressed great pleasure in the reception given him by CANBERRA's officers and men during the cruise and on March 25 CANBERRA returned to Norfolk and resumed her duties.

CANBERRA was honored again when she was selected as Fleet Review Flagship for the International Naval Review, held in Norfolk, Va., on June 12, 1957. This event was a highlight of "Fleet Week," staged as part of the Virginia Jamestown Festival. Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson, Reviewing Officer, and several other distinguished guests enjoyed the 14 mile trip, reviewing 110 ships of 17 nations.

Before the excitement over the Review had died down, CANBERRA was off to South Atlantic as a unit of Midshipmen Cruise "Alfa." Interspersed with the training of the Midshipmen were most pleasant visits to Santos and San Paulo, Brazil, San Juan, Puerto Rico, and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

In early September, 1957, CANBERRA took part in NATO exercises in the North Atlantic, during which time she visited Largs, Scotland. While participating in Operation Strikeback CANBERRA crossed the Arctic Circle on 21 September, 1957, thus making all her crew members of "The Royal Order of Bluenoses." Upon completion of the exercises CANBERRA joined the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean in October. During her five month's stay she visited Suda Bay, Izmir, Istanbul, Athens, Naples, Barcelona, Palma and Gibraltar, returning to Norfolk on March 9, 1958.

On 26 May 1958, CANBERRA completed a solemn assignment during which she met the USS BOSTON bearing an Unknown American killed in the European-African Theatre during World War II and USS BLANDY bearing both an Unknown American from the Asiatic-Pacific Theatre of World War II and an Unknown American from Korea. The three bodies were received aboard for a selection ceremony in the Atlantic. From CANBERRA, the Unknown American from the Korean War and one from World War II were transferred back to the USS BLANDY for later burial in the tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Washington, D.C. The other Unknown from World War II was buried at sea with full military funeral rites.

On June 4, Captain Charles H. Smith, USN, relieved Captain Frank H. Brumby, USN.

The CANBERRA was, for the second successive year, the proud recipient of the efficiency awards indicating top performance in the Atlantic Cruiser Force. CANBERRA received the Battle Efficiency award

for being judged the "most battle ready" cruiser operating in the Atlantic area. The other award, the Red "E" for engineering prowess, significant of all-around engineering ability.

CANBERRA participated in a Second Fleet exercise again training midshipmen enroute and visiting Vigo, Spain; Gothenburg, Sweden; and Amsterdam, Netherlands. On 5 January 1959, CANBERRA joined the Atlantic Fleet after a three-month regular overhaul.

In May, 1959, CANBERRA deployed to the Mediterranean as Flagship of Rear Admiral John McN. Taylor, USN, Commander Cruiser Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet. Beginning with the relief of the USS MACON (CA-132) in Suda Bay, Crete, the CANBERRA visited Rhodes, Greece; Naples and Leghorn, Italy; Cannes and Toulon, France; Palma de Majorca and Barcelona, Spain; and Gibraltar. In Barcelona, Spain, on 29 July, Captain Paul S. Savidge Jr., USN, relieved Captain Charles H. Smith, USN, as Commanding Officer. CANBERRA returned in August for a short leave and upkeep period. From September to December she operated in the Virginia Capes area with the U.S. Second Fleet. Serving as the Flagship of Rear Admiral L.P. Ramage, USN, Commander Cruiser Division Two, CANBERRA conducted Fleet Exercises observed by the Weapons System Evaluation Group (WSEG).

Admiral Jerauld Wright, USN, Commander in Chief Atlantic, on 5 January, 1960, selected CANBERRA as his Flagship and hosted a luncheon for the Armed Forces Policy Council and Unified Specified Commanders. Guests included the Honorable Thomas S. Gates Jr., Secretary of Defense; the Honorable W.B. Franke, Secretary of the Navy; the Honorable Dudley C. Sharpe, Secretary of the Air Force; the Honorable James H. Douglas, Deputy Secretary of Defense; the Honorable High M. Milton, Under Secretary of the Army; General Nathan F. Twining, USAF, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; Admiral Arleigh Burke, USN, Chief of Naval Operations; General David M. Shoup, USMC, Commandant U.S. Marine Corps; and all U.S. Unified and Specified Commanders.

On February 12, 1960, Captain Paul S. Savidge Jr., USN, was relieved as Commanding Officer by Captain Walter H. Baumberger, USN. Under Captain Baumberger's command with Rear Admiral John McN. Taylor, Commander Cruiser Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet and Commander Cruiser Division Six again embarked, CANBERRA sailed March 3 on an around the world cruise.

With five inches of snow providing a cold, white background, CANBERRA departed Norfolk, Va., for her 9 month global circuit. After a brief stop at Guantamano Bay, Cuba, CANBERRA once again transited the Panama Canal, though this time as a guided missile cruiser, the first of her kind ever to operate in the Pacific. After one day at Rodman,

more

Canal Zone, she proceeded to San Diego for operations with the U.S. First Fleet.

On 14 April CANBERRA departed the San Diego operating area for Australia arriving 2 May for participation in the annual Coral Sea Celebration. A very warm reception in Hawaii and a crossing the line ceremony of gigantic proportions were the high spots of the Pacific crossing. In addition a new time barrier was broken when CANBERRA fired a Terrier missile from West to East across the International Date Line, thereby firing a missile on one day and intercepting the target drone the day before.

The theme of the annual Coral Sea Celebration was "Pacific Partners" and CANBERRA was one of several U.S. Navy ships participating. Admiral Herbert G. Hopwood, Commander in Chief, Pacific, was the guest of honor for the celebration.

The highlights of the Sydney-Melbourne visit was the visit of Lady Alice G. Dixon, the sponsor of CANBERRA, and her husband, Sir Owen Dixon, presently the Chief Justice of the Australian High Court. Though Lady Dixon had christened CANBERRA in 1943, this was the first time she had set foot aboard her ship.

CANBERRA left the land "down under" on May 14 and arrived in Yokosuka on 30 May having interrupted her 18-day northbound jaunt with a brief stop-over in Guam, in the Mariannas, and a circuit of Iwo Jima of World War II fame.

After a two week availability in the Yokosuka, Naval Shipyard, during which many of the crew toured the nearby areas in Japan, CANBERRA was again underway for operations with the Navy's West Pacific Seventh Fleet.

June was the occasion for a visit to Moji, Japan, in order to fulfill a promise made to CANBERRA's homeport, Norfolk, Virginia, prior to embarking on the world cruise. Moji and Norfolk are "sister" cities, and CANBERRA carried the gifts from Norfolk to the people of Moji. The gifts were presented at a reception held aboard and the entire Moji visit was a period of much festivity between the warm-hearted citizens of Moji and CANBERRA's officers and crew.

The Fourth of July found the CANBERRA anchored at Beppu, Japan, a sea resort noted for its many hot springs and beautiful hotels.

Taking leave of the Seventh Fleet, the cruise continued to Hong Kong for a brief visit to the British Crown Colony; then to Subic Bay, for a final replenishing before starting through the Indian Ocean.

Stopping in Singapore for fuel and a short visit, the CANBERRA passed the exact half-way mark on her cruise, being directly opposite Norfolk, Virginia.

A week of good-will followed in Cochin, India, the Indian Navy's chief port. This was followed by a similar visit to Karachi, Pakistan, the Pakistan Navy's home port.

Stopping in Aden Protectorate, the CANBERRA proceeded up the Red Sea to Port Suez where she waited overnight prior to her transit of the Suez Canal on 15 August. After passing the Canal she operated with the Sixth Fleet in

in the Mediterranean. On her way from the Suez to Italy, CANBERRA crossed the line which previously had been her eastern-most point of sailing and thus, in actuality, had made a complete transit of the globe.

After relieving the NEWPORT NEWS, CANBERRA visited Cannes, France, Leghorn, Italy, and Fiumicino, Italy. At the latter anchorage the officers and crew were given the opportunity to visit the XVII Olympic Games in Rome on 7-8 September.

A short visit to Naples preceded a visit to Athens, Greece. This was followed by the ship's participation in the NATO exercises held in the Mediterranean. During the exercise the Marine Detachment formed part of the amphibious landing group which assaulted on the exercise beaches in Greece.

After a week visit to Istanbul, Turkey, followed by a short return visit to Athens, the CANBERRA was relieved by her sister-ship the USS BOSTON on 14 October.

Steaming independently, the USS CANBERRA arrived back in Norfolk, Virginia, her homeport on 24 October, completing her successful round-the-world goodwill tour, with nearly 50,000 miles steamed during the eight months of her absence.

On November 7, 1960, Captain W.H. Baumberger, USN, was relieved as Commanding Officer by Captain Eli T. Reich, USN, and under Captain Reich's command, the CANBERRA has operated under the SECOND Fleet in the Virginia Capes area, concentrating on air defense procedures and shipboard exercises designed to increase the ship's efficiency in all phases. While in port the CANBERRA has welcomed many distinguished visitors including; Secretary of the Navy-Elect John B. Connally Jr., Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Arleigh A. Burke, USN; Admiral R.L. Dennison, Commander-in-Chief, Atlantic Fleet; Vice Admiral Frank O'Beirne, Commander Naval Air, Atlantic.

On January 9, 1961, CANBERRA joined a large task force to take part in "Exercise Lantflex 1-61".